

In 1648, Baltimore sent out as Governor William Stone, a Protestant and a friend of the parliamentary party; and at the same time reconstructed the Council, so as to give the Protestants a majority.

Baltimore's instructions to his first colonists, as we have said, forbade any discrimination on account of religious differences, or any disputes on matters of faith, and all were allowed, under the common law of the province, the undisturbed enjoyment of their religion. In 1649, this policy was made written law and placed on the statute book in the famous "Toleration Act." In this Act, the calling of others by reproachful names on account of religious differences was forbidden under penalties, and "the better to preserve love and amity," it is enacted that "no person professing to believe in Jesus Christ shall be in any way molested or discountenanced for, or in respect of his religion, nor in the free exercise thereof." This Act remained the law of the land until the Puritan supremacy in 1652.

The Puritans came into Maryland in this way: In 1643, the Virginia Assembly passed a law expelling all non-conformists from the colony, upon which many came over to Maryland, where they were kindly received by the Proprietary, and wide and fertile lands in Anne Arundel were allotted them, which they joyfully accepted, and settling about the Severn River in 1649, near the site of the present city of Annapolis, called their new home Providence.

After the execution of Charles I, the Virginia Assembly proclaimed his son, Charles II, as lawful King, in defiance of the statute which made such a declaration high treason. So Parliament sent out commissioners with a force to reduce to submission "the plantations within the Chesapeake Bay," thus including Maryland, where no opposition to Parliament existed. Under this authority Governor Stone was displaced, and William Fuller, a Puritan of Providence, with a body of commissioners, was put in possession of the government. These repealed the Toleration Act of 1649, and submitted an act visiting with penalties all adherents of "popery and prelacy," as well as Quakers, Baptists and other miscellaneous sects.

Cromwell, disapproving of their doings, wrote to the Virginia commissioners commanding them to leave Maryland undisturbed. Baltimore then ordered Stone to take the government again. As Fuller refused to surrender it, Stone marched against him with the men of St. Mary's and a battle was fought on the shore of the Severn, on March 24, 1655, in which Stone's party were defeated, and he himself wounded.